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Presented in this article is a list of practical suggestions designed to aid college teachers of English in instructing disadvantaged students more effectively. (AF)

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GIVING THE DISADVANTAGED A BOOST IN ENGLISH

RICHARD L. LOUGHLIN

EVEN WHEN DISADVANTAGED students have been grouped as homogeneously as feasible, wide differences always remain in the varieties of skills demanding development. Individuals are unique. Nevertheless, you can rehabilitate many who need a second chance by heeding the following suggestions:

1. Create a wholesome climate that is conducive to economical and lasting learning.

2. Judiciously praise any sincere effort.

3. Give guidance in how to study, how to take a test, how to read, how to take notes, and how to listen critically.

4. Use concrete materials as much as possible, especially audio-visual aids.

5. Show the relationship of English to success, socially and vocationally.

6. As the mind can absorb only as much as the seat can endure and the attention span encompass, vary teaching procedures. Don't lead them to water; make them thirsty. Use repetition, drill, and review for habit formation. However, avoid "grinding away at grammar" or teaching them what they already know. Test before teaching. (Do not use class time to teach a handful what the rest of the class has mastered. Instead, assign make-up work for the bewildered. Use programmed materials or coach them individually during conferences.)

7. Treat even the weakest students with respect. You are dealing with the most precious commodity — humanity. Grant each student the "fifth freedom," the freedom to develop into his best self. (Remember that his vote will count as much as that of a genius. Democracy implies equality of opportunity for fullest growth. "God must love the common man," said Abraham Lincoln, "he made so many of them." Recall the Syrian saying: "I was common clay until roses were planted in me.")

8. Don't coddle them. Insist that each student develop whatever ability he has. For his own good, make him extend himself. Quote the motto of the paratroopers: "Quitters never win; winners never quit."

9. Remind them of the Chinese proverb: "Trouble is opportunity."

10. Read to them the following excerpt from a newspaper editorial: "The man who makes no mistakes . . . is the one who never tries anything. He is the brake on the wheel of progress. And yet it cannot be truly said he makes no mistakes because the biggest mistake is the very fact that he tries nothing, does nothing, but criticizes those who do things."

11. Require some oral or written reports or impromptus on topics growing out of the reading. Have the latter written in class to curb plagiarism and to grade students more accurately. (Good reading stimulates good writing.)

12. When the main emphasis is on the fundamentals of writing, print on the blackboard: "Think before you ink. Write to express, not to impress. The wise revise."

Mr. Loughlin is Coordinator of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Bronx Community College, New York, where he formerly served as a chairman.